

Credo of Support

**Throughout history,
people with physical and mental disabilities
have been abandoned at birth,
banished from society,
used as court jesters,
drowned and burned during the Inquisition,
gassed in Nazi Germany,
and still continue to be segregated, institutionalized,
tortured in the name of behavior management,
abused, raped, euthanized, and murdered.
Now, for the first time, people with disabilities are
taking their rightful place as fully contributing citizens.
The danger is that we will respond with remediation and
benevolence rather than equity and respect. And so, we offer
you**

A Credo for Support

**Do Not see my disability as the problem.
Recognize that my disability is an attribute.**

**Do Not see my disability as a deficit.
It is you who see me as deviant and helpless.**

**Do Not try to fix me because I am not broken.
Support me. I can make my
contribution to the community in my own way.**

**Do Not see me as your client. I am your fellow citizen.
See me as your neighbor. Remember, none of us can be self-
sufficient.**

**Do Not try to modify my behavior.
Be still and listen. What you define as
inappropriate may be my attempt to
communicate with you in the only way I can.**

**Do not try to change me,
You have no right
Help me learn what I want to know
Do not hide your uncertainty behind “professional distance.”
Be a person who listens and does not take my struggle away
from me by trying to make it all better
Do not use theories and strategies on me.
Be with me. And when we struggle with each other, let that give
rise to self-reflection.
Do not try to control me. I have a right to my power as a person.
What you call non-compliance or manipulation may actually be
the only way I can exert some control over my life.
Do not teach me to be obedient, submissive, and polite.
I need to feel entitled to say NO if I am to protect myself.
Do not be charitable towards me. The last thing the world needs
is another Jerry Lewis.
Be my ally against those who exploit me for their own
gratification.
Do not try to be my friend. I deserve more than that.
Get to know me. We may become friends.
Do not help, even if it does make you feel good.
Ask if I need your help. Let me show you how you can best
assist me.
Do not admire me. A desire to live a full life does not warrant
adoration.
Respect me, for respect presumes equity.
Do not tell, correct, and lead.
Listen, Support, and Follow.
Do not work on me.
Work with me.**

Dedicated to the memory of Tracy Latimer

Norman Kunc - Author